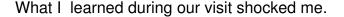
Assisting Laos



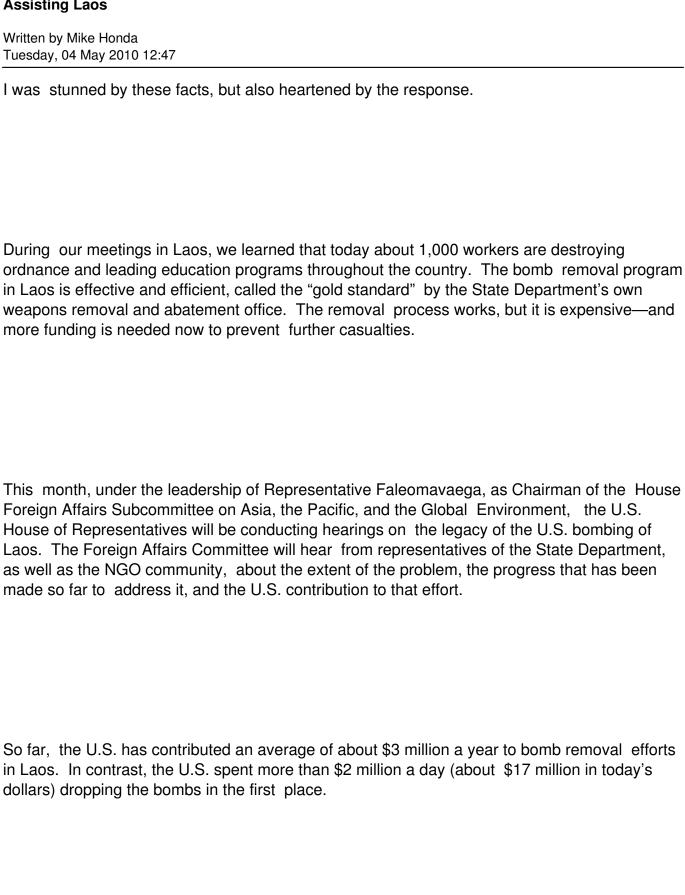


As part of its efforts during the Vietnam War, the United States began a nine-year bombing campaign in Laos in 1964 that ultimately dropped 260 million cluster bombs on the country – the most heavily bombed country in history. That's over 2.5 million tons of munitions, more than what the US dropped in WWII on Germany and Japan combined.

When the bombs hit the ground, many of these weapons did not blow up as designed, but instead remained hidden—waiting for an unsuspecting farmer or student. Of the 75 million bombs that failed to detonate, less than 1 percent has been cleared. At least 25,000 people have been killed or injured by these bombs in the 35 years following the end of the bombing campaign. Today, an average of 300 Lao people are injured or killed by these weapons every year.

Beyond these devastating human casualties, the economy has become a casualty. Laos's economy is almost entirely based on agricultural production (rice in particular), yet one-third of the land remains littered with unexplored ordnance. Clearance costs and security concerns continue to pose a barrier to farmers large and small, leaving fertile soil untilled and an agricultural economy underutilized.

Assisting Laos



We have a moral obligation to fix this problem.

Assisting Laos

Written by Mike Honda Tuesday, 04 May 2010 12:47

But first we need funds to fix it. This year, as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I requested \$7 million in the Fiscal Year 2011 budget (sustaining or increasing this figure over the coming years) and urged the State Department to make a sustained commitment to bomb removal in Laos. Just a small increase in U.S. funding would have a huge impact for the people suffering from the hidden remnants of the Vietnam War in Laos.

During our visit, we committed to the government of Laos to assist the country in its bomb removal effort. It's time we followed through on that commitment, and solved this problem, once and for all.